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Seminars on aging to guide professionals and publi

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Aging is a natural process and most people will experience it themselves, as well as with loved ones. Unfortunately, many people postpone learning about legal issues and health care for the elderly until a life-changing event occurs.

With this in mind, Upstate AHEC, Upper Savannah Agency on Aging and Piedmont Technical College will co-sponsor a five-part proactive series to help guide long-term care and assisted living administrators, nurses, social workers, counselors, as well as the general public, in understanding the aging process and issues that arise. The series of one-day seminars begins June 13 and will be presented once a month until Nov. 7.

Newspaper columnist Jan Warner of Columbia, a legal expert and frequent speaker on elder law, will present the first session at the Greenwood campus of Piedmont Tech. His topic will be "Legal Pitfalls: Protect Yourself and Your Assets."

Warner's articles on the elderly and disabled have been published in national and state legal publications. His weekly newspaper column, NextSteps, offers guidelines on matters affecting older people. He also hosts a weekly radio program dealing with long-term care planning issues. In addition, he has maintained a law practice in matrimonial and elder law for more than 30 years.

This first session will include information booths and representatives on Medicare and Medicare-D fraud, Department of Social Services and Medicaid, Social Security and other resources on aging. The program will run from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. with booths open for additional information at noon.

The second session is scheduled for July 25 and will cover "Taking Care of Your Loved One and Yourself without Guilt." It will feature Alice Truluck, owner and primary trainer for Advanced Solutions Consulting, and Karen Nichols, RN, and director of nursing at The Cottages at Brushy Creek in Greer.

A Columbia native, Truluck recently retired from the South Carolina Public Health Agency where she worked for more than 30 years.

She is dedicated to making long-term care facilities "homes" for people who need care. In her presentation on "Caring for the Care Giver," she creatively uses her humor, energy and motivation to teach others about person-centered care.

Nichols will speak on "Creating an Environment for Living." The Cottages at Brushy Creek where she heads the nursing program is a cutting-edge skilled nursing facility. It is home to 144 elders who are cared for by 140 companions and nurses. Nichols has received several awards for her dedication to the elderly, including being recognized as a Palmetto Gold Award Recipient in Nursing.

The third session on "When is Memory Loss Serious?" will be presented Aug. 29 and will include lunch. Jan Merling, education coordinator for the Office for the Study of Aging at the University of South Carolina, will talk about dementia, how to keep a dialogue open and behavioral issues.

The fourth session on Sept. 26 will provide information on "The Truth about Long-Term Care Insurance." Deborah McPherson, program manager for the Systems Transformation Grant at the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, will be the featured speaker. She has experience in health planning and in the field of disabilities and aging. McPherson is the parent of an adult daughter with Down's Syndrome.

The topic for the fifth and final session will be "Emotional and Practical Preparation for the Latter Stages in Life" on Nov. 7. Speakers will be Karen Nichols, who is also participating in the second session; David Martin, coordinator of the funeral services program at Piedmont Tech; and the Rev. Stephen Lemons, director of pastoral services at Self Regional Healthcare.

Nichols will facilitate a discussion on the movie "Going Home" which will be shown at the session. Martin's topic will be "Facts about Funeral Arrangements." Lemons will address the subject of "Easing the Loss of a Loved One." His special interests in pastoral care are spirituality and



healing and working with grief and mental illness.

Following the presentations at each session, vendor booths will be open for participants to obtain additional information. This program has been approved for continuing education credit by the South Carolina AHEC and meets the SC AHEC Best Practices Standards.

To register for individual sessions or the full series, please contact Piedmont Tech at -864-941-8400. The fee for members of the Upstate AHEC Consortium is \$25 per session. Non-member fee is \$35. The fee for long-term care and assisted-living administrators is \$50. The series is open to the public for a fee of \$20 per person per session.

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